

The Pomeranian Towns and the State of the First Piasts. The Case of Szczecin and Kołobrzeg

Marian Rębkowski

Zusammenfassung:

Dieser Artikel versucht die Entwicklung und möglichen Umbildungen der Städte Stettin und Kolberg im Zuge der Eroberungen durch die Piasten in der 2. Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts zu analysieren. Archäologische Funde sowie schriftliche Quellen belegen, dass das Interesse der Piasten an einer wohlhabenden baltischen Region schon kurz nach 930, zur Zeit ihrer Herrschaftsbildung in Großpolen, vorhanden war. Das Hauptziel ihrer militärischen Unternehmungen in den 960er Jahren waren die frühen urbanen Küstensiedlungen, die im vorhergehenden Jahrhundert entstanden waren. Einige dieser Städte, wie Stettin und Kolberg, wurden nach ihrer Eroberung nicht nur zu ökonomischen Zentren der Piasten, sondern waren auch wichtige Stützpunkte in einer Region, in der es weiterhin galt, Stämme zu erobern. Die archäologischen Spuren bezeugen eine Umstrukturierung der frühen Siedlungen und Bebauungspläne. Ein wichtiger Schritt, nicht nur aus religiöser Sicht, war die Etablierung des Bischofssitzes um das Jahr 1000, der wahrscheinlich für ganz Pommern zuständig war. Die politische Entwicklung der Städte Stettin und Kolberg nahm nach dem Sturz der Piasten-Herrschaft in Pommern im frühen 11. Jahrhundert eine neue Richtung. Die Siedlung an der Oder wurde für kurze Zeit eine unabhängige, oligarchisch organisierte Stadt und Kolberg wahrscheinlich der Ort, an dem eine eigene pommerische Staatenbildung begann.

Abstract:

The paper aims to analyse the development and possible transformations of the early towns of Szczecin and Kołobrzeg resulting from the conquering of Pomerania by the Piasts in the 2nd half of the 10th century. According to archaeological evidence and written records, it is possible to conclude that the beginnings of a Piast interest in a rich Baltic economic region can be dated as early as the 930s, the time of the formation of their rule in Greater Poland. The Piasts main aim of military expansion in Western Pomerania commencing in the 960s were the early urban coastal settlements, established in the previous century. After the conquest, some of them, such as Kołobrzeg or possibly Szczecin as well, became not only the centres of economic activity of Piast power, but provided also major support in a region in which Pomeranian tribes were still being conquered. The archaeological traces of this phenomenon point to a re-structuring of early towns and the planned organisation of their space. An extremely vital step with ideological dimension, not only in the realm of religion, was making one of them a bishopric in the year 1000, most probably covering the whole of Pomerania. After the fall of the Piast rule in Pomerania in the early 11th century, the political history of Kołobrzeg and Szczecin changed. The town on the river Oder became for some time an independent, oligarchic urban republic and Kołobrzeg in turn, by all probability, a place where the process of establishing a native Pomeranian statehood commenced.

According to the title of the conference and the agenda suggested by the organisers, its main theme is the origin of towns on Polish territories and the relationship of said origins with strongholds in the monarchy of the first Piasts. The area which will be presented here, namely the western part of Pomerania and its history in the early Middle Ages, differs in its development and history quite drastically from

the areas to the south of the rivers Warta and Noteć. Two factors had an important influence on the scale of the difference. Firstly, settlements bearing early urban characteristics were set up much earlier than in Greater Poland even before the so-called Gniezno State, the other factor being the only short lived incorporation of the Pomeranian territory into the realm of the Piasts. Such dependence, which arose

due to the expansion of Mieszko I commenced in the 960s, lasted only several dozens of years and came to an end at the beginning of the 11th century¹. The outcome of the circumstances presented briefly above must be phrased a bit differently for the underlying aim of this paper. The main issue of this paper will not be the origins of the Pomeranian towns, as they developed some time before the late 10th century², but the possible growth and transformations taking place during the rule of the Piasts, who conquered this part of land. The problems and questions mentioned above will be approached using the two urban centres Szczecin and Kołobrzeg,



Fig. 1: The state of Mieszko I and the position of Kołobrzeg and Szczecin. After M. Kara.

¹ G. Labuda (ed.), *Historia Pomorza*, t. I do roku 1466, cz. I, II (Poznań 1972²) 307 f.

² L. Leciejewicz, *Początki nadmorskich miast na Pomorzu Zachodnim* (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków 1962) 54 ff. – L. Leciejewicz, *Early towns of the Baltic Slavs and their Scandinavian parallels*. In: *Archaeology and history of the Middle Ages* (Forlì 1996) 47-53. – W. Łosiński, *W sprawie genezy osiedli wczesnomiejskich u Słowian nadbałtyckich*. *Slavia Antiqua* 35, 1994, 101-128. – W. Łosiński, *Zur Genese der frühstädtische Zentren bei den Ostseeslawen*. In: H. Brachmann (ed.) *Burg – Burgstadt – Stadt. Zur Genese mittelalterlicher nichtagrarischer Zentren in Ostmitteleuropa* (Berlin 1995) 68-91.

³ W. Łosiński, *W sprawie genezy* (note 2) 115-120. – M. Dulnicz, *Uwagi o początkach ośrodków handlowych na południowym wybrzeżu Bałtyku*. In: S. Moździoch (ed.), *Centrum i zaplecze we wczesnośredniowiecznej Europie Środkowej. Spotkania Bytomskie 3* (Wrocław 1999) 97-110.

⁴ L. Leciejewicz, *Początki* (note 2) 54-83. – L. Leciejewicz, *Zur Entwicklung von Frühstädten an der südlichen Ostseeküste*. *Zeitschrift f. Archäologie* 3, 1969, 182-210. – W. Łosiński, *W*

which have been studied through archaeological excavations (fig. 1). Apart from the excavations, another feature shared by both sites is the crystallisation of early urban settlement traits. The origins of early urban settlements on the southern coast of the Baltic are known to have been connected with the establishment of the so-called Baltic economic zone, which owed its existence to merchants coming from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, primarily the Frisians and Scandinavians. One of the most significant consequences of the incorporation of the Slavonic Baltic coast into the system of long-distance exchange, was the establishment of coastal craft and merchant settlements (named in German: *Seehandelsplätze*) of multi-ethnic character. This triggered the beginnings of town formation in the area in question³. In the literature, this model of early town development is accepted as the first but not only form of establishing early urban centres in this part of Europe. Some of the coastal Slavonic strongholds therefore begin to develop early town characteristics during the course of the 9th century at the latest. Szczecin and Kołobrzeg are considered typical examples of the latter model of these early urban settlements⁴.

Archaeological excavations of early medieval Szczecin, which began just after World War II, have continued with some interruption until today⁵. The origins of Szczecin were connected with a settlement established on a moraine outcrop (later called Castle Hill) overlooking the wide valley on the left bank of the River Oder. The beginning of the early medieval settlement set up on this part of the drumlin can most probably be dated to the 8th century AD⁶. The settle-

sprawie genezy (note 2) 107-115.

⁵ E. Cnotliwy/L. Leciejewicz/W. Łosiński (eds.), *Szczecin we wczesnym średniowieczu. Wzgórze Zamkowe* (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk, Łódź 1973) 11-13. – Publications concerning the excavations were recently listed in: M. Dworaczyk/A.B. Kowalska/M. Rulewicz, *Szczecin we wczesnym średniowieczu. Wschodnia część suburbium* (Szczecin 2003) 9 ff.

⁶ Initially dated by W. Łosiński to the 2nd half of the 7th century. Recently the author shifted the chronology to the 1st half of the 8th century: W. Łosiński, *Próba nowego spojrzenia na dzieje wczesnośredniowiecznego Szczecina*. In: E. Wilgocki et al. (ed.), *50 lat archeologii polskiej na Pomorzu Zachodnim* (Szczecin 1996) 132. – W. Łosiński, *Początki wczesnośredniowiecznego Szczecina*. In: E. Wilgocki et al. (ed.), *Res et fontes* (Szczecin 2003) 70-75. – Some years ago there appeared an attempt to change the dating of the oldest settlement on the Castle Hill to the 2nd half of the 8th or even to the beginning of the 9th century, see M. Dulnicz, *Kształtowanie się Słowiańszczyzny Północno-Zachodniej* (Warszawa 2001) 246-247.

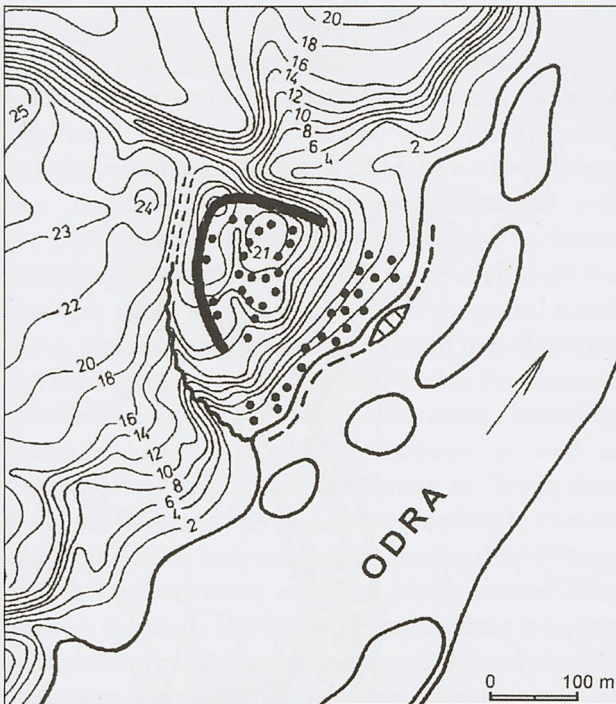


Fig. 2: Szczecin around the middle of the 9th century. After W. Łosiński. Dots mark settled area, thick line – defensive wall. In the presumed line of a harbour (dashed line) there is marked the position of the wreck of the boat deposited after 911.

ment was rebuilt during the early 9th century. It was densely covered with log houses and was surrounded, at the drumlin formation side, with an earthwork of a slatted timber construction and a deep moat (fig. 2). The traces of craft production (glass-making), merchant's accessories and imported goods (like glass beads, combs, whetstones) were recorded in the layers dating to the 9th century AD, which indicates that Szczecin became a vital centre of trade, exchange and craftsmanship at this time⁷. Favourable water routes connecting the settlement with the Bay of Szczecin and further along the arms of the Oder River to the Baltic, favoured the long-distance exchange. A harbour must have been established in the valley of the river, next to one of its overflow



Fig. 3: The wreck of the boat found in the place of later Vegetable Market. Photo: M. Rulewicz – Archive of IAE PAN.

areas, as early as the 9th century⁸. Direct evidence for this is the discovery of a boat wreck in the alluvial deposits in the area later named the Vegetable Market (German: Krautmarkt). Using dendrochronology it was established that the boat must have been built after 841 AD, and its most recent repair was probably carried out at the beginning of the second decade of the 10th century⁹ (fig. 3). Shortly afterwards the town began to grow into the river valley, which was vital for its later development. It resulted in the origin of a bi-partite early urban settlement, consisting of a stronghold and a riverside suburbium. We will come back to this issue below.

While discussing the history of Szczecin in the pre-state period, it is worth thinking about speculations concerning its tribal affiliation. Located on the left bank of the river Oder, it may not have originally been a Pomeranian stronghold, but a Luticians one, if we consider the original, geographical meaning of the name Pomerania and the presumably Pomeranian-Lutician frontier on the lower course of the river Oder. This was confirmed by Adam of Bremen in the 11th century AD. There is reason to believe that since

⁷ E. Cnotliwy/L. Leciejewicz/W. Łosiński (eds.), Szczecin (note 2), 262 ff. – W. Łosiński, Próba nowego (note 6), 133-134. – A.B. Kowalska, W. Łosiński, Szczecin: Origins and History of the Early Medieval Town. In: P. Urbańczyk (ed.), Polish Lands at the Turn of the First and the Second Millennium (Warsaw 2004) 80-81.

⁸ W. Łosiński, W sprawie lokalizacji portu wczesnośredniowiecznego Szczecina. In: Z. Kurnatowska (ed.), Słowiańszczyzna w Europie średniowiecznej, t. 2, (Wrocław 1996) 67-78. – W. Filipowiak, Wolin und Szczecin – Hafen und Topographie der mittelalterlichen Stadt. In: J. Bill/B. L. Clausen (eds.), Maritime Topography and the Medieval Town. Papers from the 5th Interna-

tional Conference on Waterfront Archaeology in Copenhagen 14-16 May 1998 (Copenhagen 1999) 66 ff.

⁹ L. Leciejewicz/M. Rulewicz/S. Wesołowski/T. Wieczorkowski, La ville de Szczecin des IX^e-XIII^e siècles. *Archaeologia Urbium*, Fasc. 2e (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk 1972) tab. IVb. – M. Rulewicz, Wrak szczecińskiej łodzi z IX wieku. In: Z. Kurnatowska (ed.), Słowiańszczyzna w Europie średniowiecznej, t. 2 (Wrocław 1996) 79-90. – T. Ważny, Dendrochronologia obiektów zabytkowych w Polsce (Warszawa 1999) 64-65. – N. Bonde/T. Ważny/A. Daly, Dendrochronological analysis of the shipwreck „Szczecin” Poland. *Nationalmuseets Naturvidenskabelige Undersøgelser*, rapport 45, 2-17.

the late 9th century Szczecin could have been the main stronghold of a small tribal group. Their settlements, establishing at the same time as the stronghold, were scattered between the lower Oder and the River Randow¹⁰.

Let us move on to Kołobrzeg on the lower course of the river Parsęta. Archaeological research on the early medieval town was carried out through excavations between 1954 and 1958, as well as in the 1990's¹¹. We know that the beginnings of the early medieval settlement must date back to the 7th–8th century, and can be linked to the exploitation of saline springs. These springs are located on the floodplains of the right bank of the river Parsęta and the so-called Salt Island. Traces of open settlement are also registered for this period on a small moraine outcrop in the centre of the contemporary town. It is most probable that at the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries a settlement of unknown origin was established on the edge of the moraine, starting about 4 kilometres to the south of the Parsęta estuary (fig. 4)¹². It was an area offering favourable settlement conditions. It was here that not much later a small stronghold was established changing the character of local settlement structures.

Using dendrochronology, the establishment of the stronghold of Kołobrzeg can be dated to about 880¹³. The beginnings of the settlement coincided with the disappearance of some older, significant strongholds situated around the lower course of the Parsęta River. These details indicate that the stronghold of Kołobrzeg was originally constructed as the main political centre of a tribe living along the lower and middle course of the river Parsęta¹⁴. The name of the tribe remains unknown. Without going into detail concerning the structure of the earthwork and the housing of the stronghold, let us point out a characteristic detail. Soon after the construction of the stronghold, during the early 10th century AD, traces

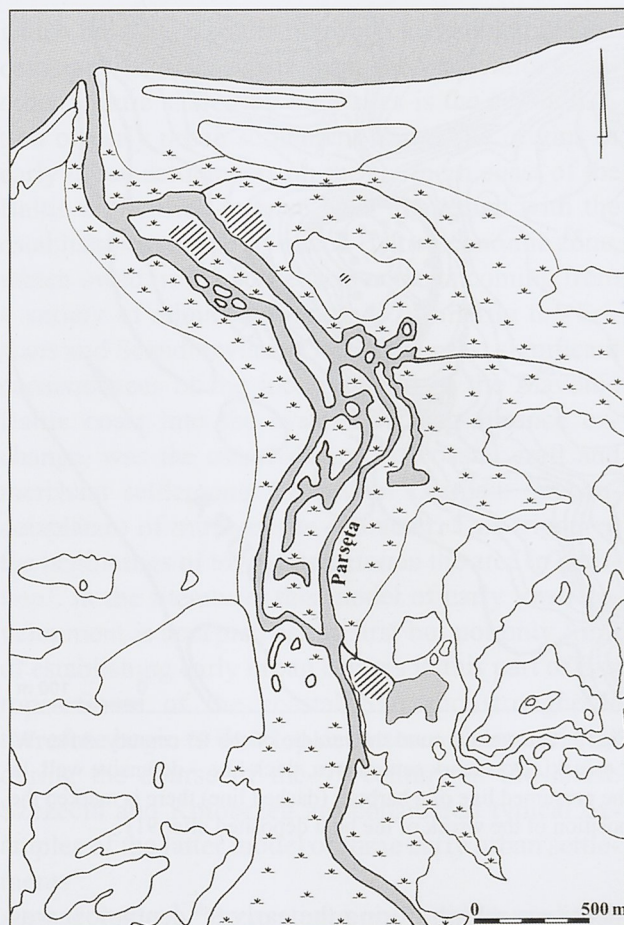


Fig. 4: Settlements (oblique lines) in the area of the mouth of the river Parsęta in the 7th–8th centuries. After L. Leciejewicz.

of craft workshops (horn and amber) can be documented and goods of foreign origin appear, which could be pointing to the existence of long-distance exchange. Of particular importance for this exchange network must have been the locally produced salt, which was also used for preserving herring. The fact that herring was fished on a large scale in Kołobrzeg has been confirmed by the fishbone remains excavated within the stronghold¹⁵.

¹⁰ R. Kiersnowski, Plemiona Pomorza Zachodniego w świetle najstarszych źródeł pisanych. *Slavia Antiqua* 3, 1951/1952, 75–76. – L. Leciejewicz, Wczesnośredniowieczne terytoria osadniczo-plemienne w dorzeczu Odry i Wisły. In: *Ars Historia. Prace z dziejów powszechnych i Polski* (Poznań 1978) 16. – W. Łosiński, Osadnictwo plemienne Pomorza (VI–X wiek) (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk, Łódź 1982) 161. – J. M. Piskorski, Pomorze plemienne. *Historia – Archeologia – Językoznawstwo* (Poznań 2002) 93–98.

¹¹ The history of archaeological research on early medieval Kołobrzeg was recently sketched by L. Leciejewicz, in: L. Leciejewicz/M. Rębkowski (eds.), *Kołobrzeg. Wczesne miasto nad Bałtykiem* (Warszawa 2007) 15–22. – See also L. Leciejewicz/M. Rębkowski, *Kolberg. Eine mittelalterliche Stadt an der Ostsee* (Kołobrzeg 2000) 26–33.

¹² To the pre-stronghold settlement structure in the region of Kołobrzeg recently L. Leciejewicz/M. Rębkowski, *Kołobrzeg – an Early Town on the Baltic Coast*. In: P. Urbańczyk (ed.), *Polish Lands (note 7)* 37. – L. Leciejewicz/M. Rębkowski (eds.), *Kołobrzeg (note 11)* 305–306.

¹³ L. Leciejewicz/M. Rębkowski (eds.), *Kołobrzeg. Wczesne (note 11)* 35–41, 306–307. – L. Leciejewicz/M. Rębkowski, *Kołobrzeg – an early (note 12)* 38–39.

¹⁴ W. Łosiński, *Początki wczesnośredniowiecznego osadnictwa grodowego w dorzeczu dolnej Parsęty (VII–X/XI w.)* (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk 1972) 168 f., 273 f.

¹⁵ L. Leciejewicz, M. Rębkowski (eds.), *Kołobrzeg (note 11)* 188 ff. – L. Leciejewicz, *Zum frühmittelalterlichen Heringshandel im südlichen Ostseegebiet*. *Zeitschrift f. Archäologie* 25, 1991, 209–214.

The short overview presented above indicates that Kołobrzeg as well as Szczecin were the main strongholds of small tribal units before the expansion of the Piasts. Both sites developed early town characteristics as early as the late 9th and the early 10th century. This process must have been connected with the participation of the inhabitants in the so-called Baltic economic zone. The goods exported from the southern coast of the Baltic Sea were grain, forest fruits, and probably also salt produced in Kołobrzeg. In exchange, foreign products arrived in Pomeranian settlements located on the Baltic coast, including specialised crafts, phyllite whetstones, as well as Arabic silver dirham's. According to Władysław Łosiński long distance and domestic trade in Pomerania could have been monetised during the 10th century. A rapid increase of hiding silver hoards dates back to the years 930–970. In this context it is also important to note that around the middle of the 10th century, a sharp decline of Arabic dirhams can be documented as well as the appearance of Western European coins¹⁶.

Archaeological findings from Greater Poland indicate that an interest arose in the Baltic market after 930, at least among the elites of the Gniezno State, which was being established at that time. Arabic silver coins start to appear in the 930s, for which the Baltic direction of inflow is quite likely. Other goods such as phyllite whetstones, beads and some elements of armour appear as well at this time¹⁷. Moreover, it is very telling that the first written records containing information on Mieszko I disclose his military involvement on the lower course of the river Oder. They mention in particular the battles against Wichmann and the tribe of Wolinians in the years 963 and 967, as well as the battle of Cedynia fought in 972, which later concluded with the subordination of Western Pomerania to the Piasts¹⁸.

¹⁶ W. Łosiński, W sprawie rozwoju gospodarki towarowo-pieniężnej na ziemiach polskich we wczesnym średniowieczu w kontekście dziejów obrotu pieniężnego w strefie nadbałtyckiej. Część II. *Archeologia Polski* 36, 1991, 238 ff. – W. Łosiński, Miejsce Pomorza i Wielkopolski w kształtowaniu się gospodarki towarowo-pieniężnej w Polsce wczesnofeudalnej. *Slavia Antiqua* 37, 1996, 163-180.

¹⁷ W. Łosiński, Chronologia, skala i drogi napływu monet arabskich do krajów europejskich u schyłku IX i w X w. *Slavia Antiqua* 34, 1993, 24 f. – Z. Kurnatowska, Początki Polski (Poznań 2002) 72-73. – M. Kara, Archeologia o początkach Państwa Piastów (wybrane zagadnienia). In: W. Fałkowski (ed.), *Kolory i struktury średniowiecza* (Warszawa 2004) 298-299.

¹⁸ J. Strzelczyk, *Mieszko Pierwszy* (Poznań 1992) 81 ff. – G. Labuda, *Mieszko I* (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków 2002) 72 ff. The long discussion of historians concerning the time of con-



Fig. 5: Geography of the document "Dagome iudex" according to G. Labuda.

Some researchers still have doubts as to the ultimate range of the rule of the first Piasts in Pomerania, which is also due to the variety of interpretations of the expression 'longum mare' to be seen on the famous document dating back most probably to 991, known as 'Dagome iudex'¹⁹. It seems, however, that the historians in favour of the idea that Mieszko I conquered the whole of Pomerania between the lower course of the river Vistula and the lower course of the river Oder could be correct (fig. 5). The culmination of the authority of the Piasts was the establishment of a bishopric in Kołobrzeg in the year 1000 during the reign of Mieszko I's son, Bolesław the Brave. The bishopric was subordinated to the archbishopric which was established at that time in Gniezno. It is quite likely that the bishopric in Kołobrzeg was intended to cover the total territory of Pomerania between the rivers Oder and Vistula²⁰.

quering of Pomerania by the Piasts reported newly by B. Śliwiński, *Początki Gdańska. Dzieje ziem nad zachodnim brzegiem Zatoki Gdańskiej w I połowie X wieku* (Gdańsk 2009) 23-31.

¹⁹ Recently G. Labuda, *Mieszko* (note 18) 177 ff., 267-269. – G. Labuda, Stan dyskusji nad dokumentem Dagome iudex i państwem Schinesghe. In: W. Chudziak (ed.), *Civitas Schinesghe cum pertinentiis* (Toruń 2003) 9-17.

²⁰ *Kronika Thietmara*, ed. by M.Z. Jedlicki (Poznań 1953), IV, 45. – G. Labuda, *Początki diecezjalnej organizacji kościelnej na Pomorzu i Kujawach w XI i XII wieku*. *Zapiski Historyczne* 23/3, 1968, 20. – J. Petersohn, *Der südliche Ostseeraum im kirchlich-politischen Kräftespiel des Reiches, Polens und Dänemarks vom 10. bis 13. Jahrhundert*. *Mission – Kirchenorganisation – Kulturpolitik* (Köln, Graz 1979) 42.

However, the line of the north-western frontier of the Piast dominion in Pomerania is sometimes subject to doubt. Most historians have the opinion that Wolin kept its independence whereas Szczecin became subordinated to the Piasts²¹. Anyway, it is quite likely that it was already at this time that the original name ‘Pomerania’ acquired a political and administrative meaning²². We can assume that important strongholds, especially those performing the functions of early medieval towns, must have become the main centres for the establishment of new rules in Pomerania. These centres might not have had only political and economic, but also ideological dimensions for the new sovereignty. Let us now see if these presumptions are in any way confirmed by archaeological evidence recorded so far in Kołobrzeg and Szczecin.

Settlement studies carried out by W. Łosiński have shown that crucial structural changes occurred over a considerable area of Pomerania at the end of the 10th century. These changes are almost certainly caused by the breaking up of the tribal structures, due to the conquest of Pomerania by the Piasts. As part of these transformations, many strongholds were given up, resulting in a considerable decrease of the percentage of strongholds in the whole settlement area. As a result a settlement structure more typical for a centralized form of power appeared, with fewer but larger strongholds. Almost all strongholds of the archaeologically well understood tribe living on the territory of the middle and lower course of the River Parsęta were given up, and two superior strongholds were established, namely Kołobrzeg and Białogard²³. Considerable changes were also taking place within the early urban stronghold centre of Kołobrzeg itself.

Firstly, let us note the renovation and strengthening of the stronghold walls. In place of the old buildings, dating back to the period soon after the middle of the 10th century, which were adjoining the earlier earthwork structure of the defence wall, a grille timber construction of oak and beech appears, strengthening the fortification line from the inner part of the stronghold (fig. 6). While constructing it elements of

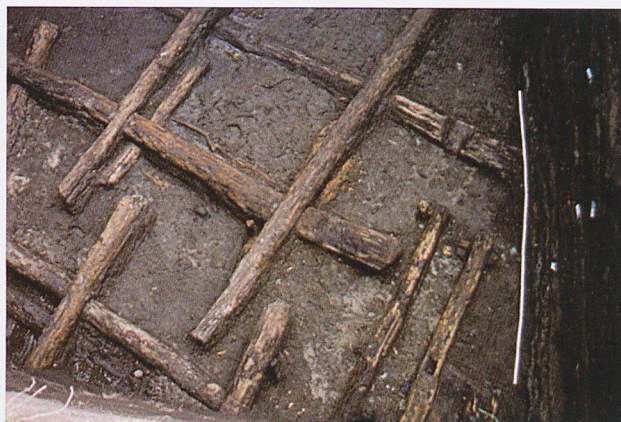


Fig. 6: Kołobrzeg. One of a few levels of beams composing the construction of the defensive wall of the stronghold. End of the 10th century. Photo: M. Rębkowski.

a so called “hook structure”, quite typical for the strongholds of Greater Poland, were applied as well. It is not clear whether at that time the area of the stronghold was extended to the north. The results of dendrochronological analyses indicate that the timber used for the renovation of the stronghold walls was obtained from no fewer than three cuttings separated by a time period of 14 years. Although no absolute date was obtained from the structure itself, its dating is possible thanks to the stratigraphic sequence of cultural deposits and the dendrochronological dates obtained from other building levels. The girder recorded above the destruction of the earthwork, most probably lying in secondary position, came from an oak cut down after 986. Inside the earthwork, an Ethelred’s denar struck after 987 or perhaps after 997 was found²⁴. These findings allow the beginnings of the rebuilding of the earthwork of Kołobrzeg to be dated to the 980s or the 990s, which is the time immediately preceding the establishment of the bishopric in the year 1000. It seems worth noting in this context that the establishment of bishoprics in Gniezno and Wrocław was also preceded by the extension or rebuilding of the strongholds²⁵.

Approximately in the same period, at the turn of the 10th and the 11th centuries, areas outside the stronghold begin to be settled, creating at least one (north-

²¹ The discussion on the subject reported recently by J. M. Pisorski, *Pomorze* (note 10) 73 ff.

²² L. Leciejewicz, *Plemiona zachodniopomorskie w wczesnym średniowieczu*. *Archeologia Polski* 5/1, 1960, 106. – J. M. Pisorski, *Pomorze* (note 10) 26-28.

²³ W. Łosiński, *Początki wczesnośredniowiecznego* (note 14) 206-207. – W. Łosiński, *Struktura terytorialno-polityczna Pomorza w XI stuleciu w świetle archeologii*. *Slavia Antiqua* 28,

1981/1982 (1983), 113-117.

²⁴ L. Leciejewicz/M. Rębkowski (eds), *Kołobrzeg. Wczesne* (note 11) 59-68, 135-140.

²⁵ Z. Kurnatowska, *The stronghold in Gniezno in the light of older and more recent studies*. In: P. Urbańczyk (ed.), *Polish Lands* (note 7) 187 ff. – P. Rzeźnik, A. Żurek, *Wrocław około roku 1000*. In: Sz. Skibiński (ed.), *Polska na przełomie I i II tysiąclecia* (Poznań 2001) 339 f.

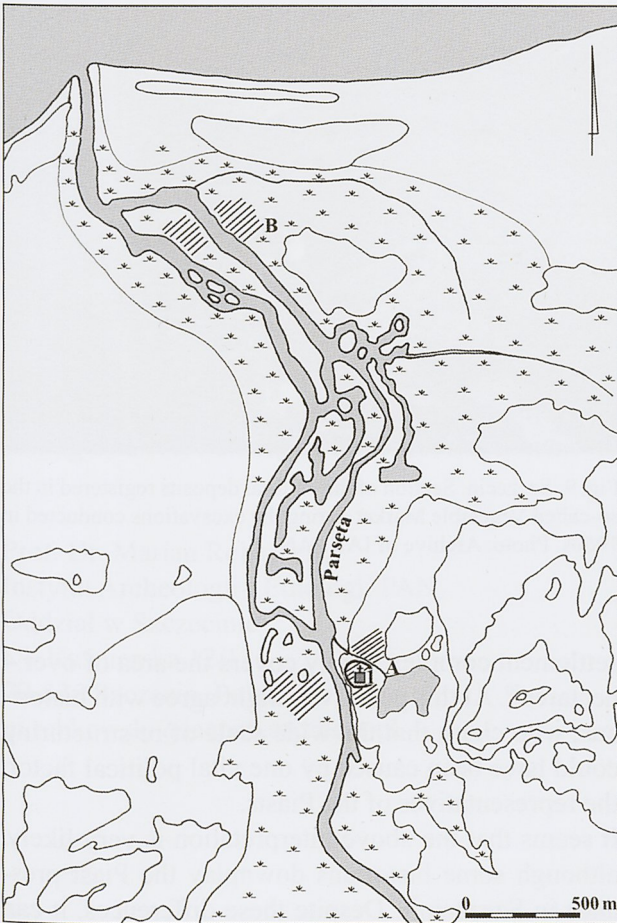


Fig. 7: Settlements (oblique lines) in the area of the mouth of the river Parsęta at the beginning of the 11th century. Inside of the walls of the stronghold (thick line) there is marked the position of the cathedral. After L. Leciejewicz/M. Rębkowski.

ern) suburbium and the establishment of a stronghold settlement complex (fig. 7).

The establishment of the bishopric mentioned above had an extraordinary ideological dimension to the Piast organisation of Kołobrzeg. It meant the origin of a Christian place of worship of the highest rank in a pagan country, very likely in place of, or in the immediate vicinity of a pagan place of worship. In his *Chronicle*, Thietmar records the case of bishop Reinbern destroying pagan gods²⁶.

Excavations in Kołobrzeg were limited by space and did not discover the remains of a church. However, they did provide some premises concerning its al-

leged location and interior design. The identification of the topography of the stronghold and its immediate neighbourhood at the turn of the 10th and the 11th century as well as analogies used from other cathedrals of that period, allow concluding that the church of Kołobrzeg was constructed inside the stronghold, most probably in its eastern, highest part. Some relevant objects, like a ceramic relief plate and a stone slab, which could have been part of the church, were found in cultural layers dating back to the 10th and the 11th centuries and were situated not far from the location in question. However, these are only indications, pointing to the possibility of at least the commencing of the construction of a church stone structure in Kołobrzeg around the year 1000 or shortly after²⁷. It is worth remembering that in the light of archaeological excavations the construction of stone cathedrals commenced at that time also in all other Piast bishoprics. The construction of such a building in Kołobrzeg would have had in that particular cultural environment an extra ideological dimension, connected not only with religion, but also the monumental significance of the new political power.

A more complete picture emerges when looking at what is happening in Szczecin at that time. As mentioned above, the first changes in the spatial organisation of the settlement might be slightly preceding the conquest of the territory on the river Oder by the Piasts. Hence it is very likely that as early as in the 930s or 940s, or only a little later, the construction of a second settlement begins, between the stronghold lying on the moraine outcrop and the bank of the river, in the floodplain (fig. 8). The oldest structures relevant to the development were recorded in the neighbourhood of the later Vegetable Market, where a boat was deposited after 911, which is the youngest dendrochronological date of the repair²⁸. It was probably due to the swampy and unstable ground at that time that the oldest buildings were constructed using wattle. Only a little later, possibly around the mid 10th century the same development happens also in the southern part of the later suburb (fig. 9). The establishment of a settlement on the floodplain must have meant the shifting of the harbour to the main reaches of the river Oder²⁹.

²⁶ *Kronika Thietmara* (note 20) VII, 72. – S. Rosik, Reinbern – Salsae Cholbergiensis aelessiae episcopus. In: L. Leciejewicz/M. Rębkowski (eds.), *Salsae Cholbergiensis. Kołobrzeg w średniowieczu* (Kołobrzeg 2000) 87-90.

²⁷ L. Leciejewicz, Czy biskup Reinbern budował katedrę w Kołobrzegu? *Archaeologia Historica Polona* 15/1 (Toruń 2005)

59-67. – M. Rębkowski, *Chryścianizacja Pomorza Zachodniego* (Szczecin 2007) 23-25.

²⁸ N. Bonde/T. Ważny/A. Daly, *Dendrochronological* (note 9).

²⁹ A. B. Kowalska/W. Łosiński, *Szczecin: Origins* (note 7) 77-79.

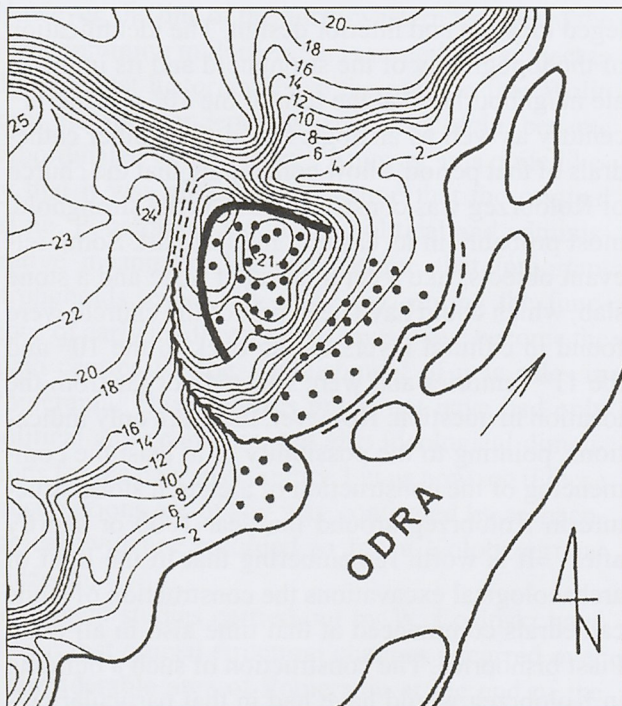


Fig. 8: Szczecin at the turn of the 10th and the 11th century. After W. Łosiński. Dots mark settled area, thick line – defensive wall, dashed line – the presumed line of a harbour.

Recent historians of Szczecin, researching its spatial development in detail, determined the time of rebuilding of its settlement complex to the 2nd half of the 10th century. In their opinion it was at this time that the town received its ‘new urban shape’. The changes taking place after this period rest on the transformations of building infrastructure and can be observed both inside the stronghold as well as within the riverside settlement. In the stronghold itself the changes to building arrangements are becoming clearer. Although becoming less regular, the concentration of timber log-constructed buildings in its central part is becoming more visible. The settlement structure on the floodplain on the other hand can be characterised by dense, solid log constructed houses. A new, timber covered street connects the settlement with the new harbour and the bank of the main reaches of the river. Interestingly, changes taking place at that time also mean transformations in the social-topography of the town. From this time the overwhelming majority of high quality goods concentrate in the lower, riverside area, where, the economic centre of Szczecin has shifted to. The whole

³⁰ W. Łosiński, *Próba nowego* (note 6) 136. – A.B. Kowalska/W. Łosiński, *Szczecin: Origins* (note 7) 81-82.



Fig. 9: Szczecin. Section of the cultural deposits registered in the so-called Vegetable Market during the excavations conducted in 1960s. Photo: Archive of IAE PAN.

settlement complex finally covers the area of over 4 hectares³⁰. At this point, we might agree with historians, who claim that the wide scale of re-structuring could have been caused by one vital political factor, the representatives of the Piasts.

It seems that the above interpretation is very likely, although some historians downplay the Piast presence in Szczecin³¹. Despite these differences, it can be noted that the economical interest of the state of the first Piasts resulted in gaining control over the area along the lower Oder since the 960s. As the river itself was the only connection between Szczecin and its economic hinterland, the above situation must have had some influence on both the economic as well as the political conditions of the town.

In summary, we can say that in comparison to the written records, the archaeological evidence indicates that the beginnings of an interest of the Piasts in a rich Baltic economic region dates back to the 930s, the beginnings of their rule in Greater Poland. The main aim of military expansion of the Piasts in Western Pomerania that commenced in the 960s was the early coastal urban settlements, established as early as during the previous century. After the conquest, some of them, such as Kołobrzeg or possibly Szczecin as well, became not only the centres of economic activity of the Piast power, but also areas of support in an environment of Pomeranian tribes being conquered. The archaeological traces of the

³¹ Recently for example G. Labuda, *Mieszko* (note 18) 188. – J.M. Piskorski, *Pomorze* (note 10) 73-75.

phenomenon are primarily remains pointing to the restructuring of early town settlements and the organisation of their space. An extremely vital ideological dimension, not only the realm of religion, was making one of them a bishopric in the year 1000, most probably meant for the whole of Pomerania. After the fall of the Piast rule in Pomerania in the early 11th century, the political history of Kołobrzeg and Szczecin went their separate ways. The town on the river Oder became for some time an independent, oligarchic urban republic whereas Kołobrzeg, by all probability, a place where the process of establishing a native, Pomeranian statehood commenced.

Prof. Dr. Marian Rębkowski

